

# Spectrum



Photos by Bonnie Heater

Soldiers from Company B, 73rd Ordnance Battalion visit Heritage Academy, located on 333 Greene Street in Augusta, Ga. They will be volunteering their Saturdays to help renovate the gutted second floor of the school.

## Soldiers continue building dream

Bonnie Heater  
Signal staff

About a year ago Soldiers from Company B, 73rd Ordnance Battalion helped the community of Augusta realize a long awaited dream.

With the help of other volunteers, Soldiers resurrected the first floor of the two-story historical Heritage Academy at 333 Greene St. in Olde Town Augusta.

During a ribbon cutting ceremony Aug. 17, 2007 Linda Tucciarone, Heritage Academy executive director, spoke about the vision of the school's founder. "It was Mr. John Houghton's dream in 1853 to provide education for the underprivileged children of our city," she said. "It has been the dream of Heritage Academy for years to have a permanent home for the school. Most important, Heritage is about the making of dreams of the future generations of Augusta citizens come true."

Soldiers assigned to Company B, 73rd Ordnance Battalion, began working on the school because their commander at the time, Capt. Raimond Willis, made it the company's volunteer project. Willis said he first learned about the project at the Warren Baptist Church in Augusta where he and his Family attended.

Willis has since been reassigned, but the company's first sergeant is still with the company. He worked with the first group of Soldiers to help renovate the first floor of the school and on Feb. 16 he took a new group of Soldiers from the company to visit Heritage Academy.

"I wanted the Soldiers to tour the school and see what was accomplished by our company and other volunteers," said 1st Sgt. Frederick Murry, Co. B-73rd Ord. Bn. first sergeant. He explained how more than 1,000 volunteer man hours were donated by Soldiers of the company to lay tile in the bathrooms and hang sheet rock in the new 320-seat auditorium.

In addition, Soldiers stained wood floors, tore up old cracked

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**1st Sgt. Frederick Murry  
First Sergeant  
Company B 73rd Ordnance Battalion**

sidewalks, mowed, painted, and built playground equipment for the children, said the first sergeant "Now we want to finish the job we started. The second floor is gutted and needs to be renovated as was done earlier with the first floor.

As they toured the second floor several members of the small group of Soldiers whispered in disbelief, "I can't believe it."

After a briefing on what needed to be done the Soldiers went right to work. As one small group of them remained on the second floor helping to pick up loose boards and debris, more experienced, volunteer carpenters and construction workers began working on the structure. Another group went outside and planted 10 new trees in the school's back yard on the playground.

One Soldier started the mower and began cutting the grass.

The volunteers from Co. B 73rd Ord. Bn. plan to work every Saturday to help finish what they believe is a worthy community project their brothers and sisters in arms began about a year ago.

Meanwhile, the more than 100 students in grades K through 6 will continue attending classes on the first floor of the school. Heritage Academy will add a grade each year until it has reached the 8th grade in 2009, according to Tucciarone.

The Houghton School, which opened in 1853 as a result of a be-

quest from local merchant John Houghton to provide an education to the children of needy Families in Augusta, was destroyed by fire in 1916. It was replaced with the 50,000 square-foot Spanish-style building that exists today. During its 85 year history, more than 45,000 students were educated there. The building was vacated in 2001, and fell into dispair, according to the school's executive director.

Local businessman, Clay Boardman, purchased the building in 2005, replaced the roof and windows, and restored the exterior. Heritage Academy purchased the building from Boardman in December 2006 for \$1 million and began a \$1.6 million renovation of the first floor and grounds just two months later.

The renovated first floor now includes nine classrooms, a 320 seat auditorium, a media center, cafeteria and offices.

Tuition only provides 20 percent of the operating budget. The "Continue the Heritage" Capital Campaign to date has raised more than \$2.45 million to purchase and renovate the building. An additional \$500,000 is still needed, according to Helen Morgan, the school development director.

Any person or organization wishing to contribute or desiring more information about the campaign can contact Morgan at (706) 821-0034 or at [hmorgan@knology.net](mailto:hmorgan@knology.net).



(Above) Phin Hitchcock, a volunteer and board member of Heritage Academy, explains to Soldiers assigned to Company B, 73rd Ordnance Bn., how the first floor of the school once looked like the gutted second floor that they are standing on (Left) Pvt. Robert Moore helps pick up loose boards and debris on the second floor of Heritage Academy. His efforts give more

experienced, volunteer carpenters and construction workers more time to work on the skilled construction tasks. (Bottom left) Hitchcock points out the playground from a refurbished first floor classroom. Fellow Soldiers from the company worked last year with other community volunteers to restore nine classrooms, a 320 seat auditorium, a media center, cafeteria and offices.



Pfc. Nicholas Colangelo (left) and Pvt. Jessika Hummel remove a live oak from its pot. The Soldiers helped plant 10 trees at Heritage Academy Feb. 17.

